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**June 19th, 2017**

## **Cooperative Community Solar Gardens Open Subscriptions**

*Community organizations partner to bring savings and ownership through clean, local energy to residents across Minnesota*

Residents of several counties in Minnesota are now eligible to subscribe to five new Community Solar Gardens being developed throughout the state.

The Community Solar Gardens provide power that will offset the energy bills of hundreds of households for which rooftop solar is not an option. **They allow homeowners and renters to support clean, renewable energy while saving money on electricity.** Subscriptions are now available to all Xcel Energy customers in Anoka, Benton, Blue Earth, Dakota, Dodge, Faribault, Freeborn, Goodhue, Hennepin, Le Sueur, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Stearns, Steele, Waseca, and Wright counties.

In an innovative cross-sector development partnership, the solar arrays will be developed and managed by Cooperative Energy Futures (CEF), a Minnesota member-owned energy cooperative. Local organizations Community Power, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL), and Northcountry Cooperative Foundation (NCF) are currently helping community members sign-up. The US Department of Energy has recognized this partnership as an awardee in its Solar In Your Community Challenge, which helps accelerate low-income access to solar nationwide.

Eligible residents for community solar have the opportunity to subscribe for up to 120 percent of their electricity needs. Electricity from a community solar array is delivered to Xcel's distribution grid, and Xcel credits subscribers' bills for the energy the community solar garden produces.

Subscriptions are available in two plans. One option is pay-as-you-go: Subscribers pay monthly, with no upfront costs, at a rate that creates immediate energy cost savings. A pay-as-you-go subscription helps residents lower their electricity costs immediately





while saving even more over time through a flat long-run energy price. The other option is an upfront subscription, which is a one-time payment that will on average cover a user's full cost of electricity over the next 25 years.

Unlike many community solar gardens developed for Xcel Energy customers, these solar gardens will focus first on residential subscribers. These gardens do not include income or credit minimums, meaning all residents who receive a bill from Xcel in the eligible counties can join in. The solar projects are cooperatively controlled: CEF's board is democratically elected by participating residents and profits after operating expenses and financing costs are returned to those residents.

Says Cooperative Energy Futures General Manager Timothy DenHerder-Thomas, "CEF is developing solar in a way that helps people who often get left out to use clean energy to help themselves and make healthier communities for everyone. To make this vision a reality, we're working with organizations that share our mission of a more environmentally conscious and engaged society that builds wealth for all of us."

#### **About the Project Partners**

- CEF is a Minnesota member-owned clean energy co-op that empowers communities to take charge of their energy future, including through residential solar and home insulation group contracting and two other community solar gardens, which are already filled
- Community Power is a nonprofit coalition that activates Minnesota communities to expand energy options across the state that are clean, local, affordable, equitable, and reliable.
- MNIPL is a nonprofit network of 450 faith organizations, which promotes clean energy and climate justice, and educates community residents about solar power and solar gardens.
- NCF transforms lives and communities through cooperative enterprise, primarily by helping residents of manufactured housing communities organize cooperatives.

Interested residents can learn more about these cooperative community solar projects at <https://cooperativeenergyfutures.com/communitysolar/> or identify their interest at <https://cooperativeenergyfutures.com/communitysolar/subscribe/>

